

STUDY OF TAIWANESE COMPOSER GORDON CHIN'S
PIANO CONCERTO NO.1

BY

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Table of Contents

LISTS OF TABLES.....	v
LISTS OF EXAMPLES.....	vi
INTRODUCTION.....	1
The Composer	1
Career.....	1
Musical Language and Style.....	1
Compositional Output.....	4
Religious Influences.....	5
Piano Concerto No.1.....	6
The Work.....	6
Music vs. Poetry.....	6
The Preview of Piano Concerto.....	8
CHAPTER I.....	9
The First Movement “Villanelle”	9
Poetic and Musical Structure.....	9
Stanzas v.s Breaks.....	16
Formal Repetitions.....	17
Views from a Pianist.....	20
CHAPTER II.....	25
The Second Movement “Adagio”.....	25
The Haiku.....	25
Musical Interpretation.....	29
Formal Structure.....	37
Views from a Pianist.....	40

CHAPTER III	42
The Third Movement “♩ = 104–108”	42
Poetic Stubbornness	42
Musical Stubbornness	45
Quotations	52
Formal Structure	56
Views from a Pianist	58
 CONCLUSION	 63
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 65

LISTS OF TABLES

1.1	The Structure of a Standard Villanelle	10
1.2	Variations in Both Refrains A1 and A2	13
1.3	Structural Comparison between a Villanelle and the First Movement.....	14
1.4	Structural Comparison between Rondo and Villanelle.....	19
2.1	Haiku Writing in Both Japanese and English.....	27
2.2	Details of the Haiku.....	28
2.3	Structure and Musical Details of the Second Movement.....	37
3.1	The Repetition in the Poem <i>The Night is Darkening Round Me</i>	44
3.2	Different Method of the Repetition.....	46
3.3	Structure and Musical Details of the Third Movement.....	57

LISTS OF EXAMPLES

1.1	Refrain A1, mm. 1–10, 1 st movt.	17
1.2	Refrain A2, mm. 21–30, 1 st movt.	18
1.3	IX mm. 1–3, 1 st movt.	20
1.4	XVI mm. 4–6, 1 st movt.	20
1.5	IX mm. 4–8, 1 st movt.	21
1.6	XVII mm. 9–11, 1 st movt.	22
1.7	XVI mm. 6–8, 1 st movt.	23
1.8	XXI mm. 5–6, 1 st movt.	23
1.9	XII mm. 1–6, 1 st movt.	24
2.1	mm. 13–26, 2 nd movt.	30
2.2	mm. 26–44, 2 nd movt.	31
2.3	mm. 62–67, 2 nd movt.	31
2.4	mm. 51–52, 2 nd movt.	33
2.5	mm. 62–67, 2 nd movt.	33
2.6	John Dowland’s “Flow my tears,” mm. 1–2.....	33
2.7	mm. 1–4, 2 nd movt.	34
2.8	mm. 93–97, 2 nd movt.	34
2.9	mm. 1–2, 2 nd movt.	35
2.10	m. 13, 2 nd movt.	35
2.11	mm. 115–18, 2 nd movt.	35
2.12	mm. 13–18, 2 nd movt.	35
2.13	mm. 1–8, 2 nd movt.	36
2.14	mm. 107–10, 2 nd movt.	39
2.15	mm. 119–21, 2 nd movt.	39
2.16	mm. 125–129, 2 nd movt.	39

2.17	mm. 185–86, 2 nd movt.	39
2.18	mm. 21–26, 2 nd movt.	40
2.19	mm. 59–64, 2 nd movt.	41
2.20	mm. 125–129, 2 nd movt.	41
3.1	mm. 68–74, 3 rd movt.	47
3.2	mm. 3–11, Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto No. 3, 1 st movt.	47
3.3	mm. 83–88, 3 rd movt.	47
3.4	mm. 1–6, 3 rd movt.	48
3.5	mm. 17–20, 3 rd movt.	48
3.6	mm. 17–19 vs. 47–49, 3 rd movt.	49
3.7	mm. 17–20, 3 rd movt.	49
3.8	mm. 90–94, 3 rd movt.	50
3.9	mm. 90–91, 3 rd movt.	50
3.10	mm. 68–74, 3 rd movt.	51
3.11	mm. 204–07, 3 rd movt.	52
3.12	mm. 166–68, 3 rd movt.	53
3.13	mm. 236–38, 3 rd movt.	53
3.14	mm. 165–66, 3 rd movt.	54
3.15	mm. 191–94, 3 rd movt.	55
3.16	mm. 245–47, 3 rd movt.	55
3.17	mm. 236–46, 3 rd movt.	59
3.18	mm. 68–72, 3 rd movt.	60
3.19	mm. 83–85, 3 rd movt.	60
3.20	mm. 85–89, 3 rd movt.	61
3.21	mm. 107–10, 3 rd movt.	61
3.22	mm. 113–15, toward the end of section IV, 3 rd movt.	62
3.23	mm. 72–75, the second half of the 2 nd theme, 3 rd movt.	62
3.24	mm. 90–91, the theme of the stretto, 3 rd movt.	62

INTRODUCTION

The Composer

Career

Dr. Gordon Chin is one of Taiwan's most active contemporary composers. He was born in 1957 in Taiwan, moved to Japan while studying in middle school, and received his Bachelor's degree in both composition and piano at Biola University. He completed his DMA degree in composition at the Eastman School of Music at the University of Rochester in 1988, under the tutelage of Samuel Adler, Warren Benson and Christopher Rouse. At the end of 1988 Dr. Chin returned to Taiwan and actively devoted himself to the local musical environment. He currently serves as the music director of YinQi Chorus and Symphony Orchestra in Taipei, Taiwan, and is also a composition faculty member at National Taiwan Normal University. While maintaining a busy career as both conductor and teacher, Dr. Chin is also an ambitious composer whose work has seen regular released.

Musical Language and Style

Among many western reviewers, Dr. Chin is known for his western musical language and instrumental writing. For example, Timothy Mangan of the Los Angeles Times describes Dr. Chin as "a confident master of the Western modernistic large

orchestra idiom” after he listened to the Symphony No.3 “Taiwan” in 1997.¹ Richard Buell in the Boston Globe wrote about Dr. Chin’s *Phantasy for Violin and Piano* in 1998 “trafficked in high emotion and virtuosity, having next to nothing that was ethnological about it.”² Phillip Scott in Fanfare Magazine mentioned Dr. Chin’s style “a contemporary language: little of it makes one think of traditional Chinese music”³ after listening to the recording of Double Concerto in 2007. There seems to be a contradiction between the reviews and Chin’s actual effort because Dr. Chin has started to develop a series of suites called “Caring for Taiwan” which he called “a journal of rediscovering Taiwan” since 1994. After realizing his true identity as an authentic Taiwanese composer several years after he returned to Taiwan, he applied different elements to experiment creating “Taiwanese flavor” in his music. These included Taiwanese language, titles, musical material of the locals and indigenous people, and the concept of humanity for caring for the homeland. Instead of using the materials that would be immediately recognized as Oriental such as pentatonic scales, Dr. Chin manipulates the Taiwanese elements in a subtle way with high craftsmanship. These local idioms are aurally recognizable to the educated Taiwanese audience, but not necessarily to the western ears.

¹ Timothy Mangan, “Salute to Taiwan Features 2 Composers,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 28 1997.

² Richard Buell, “Expert, Earthy Bartok; High-Energy Sheng,” *Boston Globe*, 14 April 1998, Third Edition 1.

³ Phillip Scott, “Chin Double Concerto Formosa Seasons,” *Fanfare* 30 (July/August 2007), 104-05.

Dr. Chin composes in many styles, and most of his serious compositions are based on new sounds, new perceptions of tonality, and new possibilities of musical forms. Rather than inventing new instrumental mechanisms and experimental sonorities like some contemporary composers today, he considers his musical personality to be Romanticist.⁴ For him, the musical expression, both content and spirit, is more important than ensemble arrangements and the musical language. Depending on the music's needs, Dr. Chin composes in any possible settings and styles even with the twelve-tone series, a method he is not particularly fond of.

Dr. Chin's writing for individual instruments is very idiomatic; each instrument is well represented in its original characters when he is experimenting new possibilities of sound. Being a fine pianist, his piano writing generally requires a high demand of finger strength and sensitivity of color changes, along with intensive emotional projection. In chamber work such as *Phantasy for Violin and Piano* (1995), the piano shows a variety of expression even though the violin is the main instrument, providing a colorful harmony platform and rhythmic support for the violin to soar above. Alternatively the piano is king in the *Piano Concerto No.1* (2009). With a full-scaled tutti as its powerful background, the solo piano energetically displays pianist brilliance in diverse musical expressions with freely-used atonality, which is

⁴ Gordon Chin, e-mail message to author, February 1, 2014.

reminiscent of Prokofiev's piano concerti. In this concerto, Dr. Chin clearly shows his knowledge of the piano while elaborating its unique quality and capacity.

Compositional Output

Currently serving as a music director of YinQi Chorus and Symphony orchestra in Taipei since 1996, Dr. Chin composes large settings of both chorus and symphony. His extensive catalog of composition contains four symphonies, a cantata, many concerti including various solo instruments, numerous choral and chamber works, percussion ensembles, and works for solo instruments. It is worth mentioning that Dr. Chin composed the very first indigenous Taiwanese opera *Mackay—the Black Bearded Bible Man*, which premiered in 2008 in National Chiang Kai-Shek Cultural Centre's National Theatre in Taipei, and is an important step toward establishing a Taiwanese operatic repertoire.

Since 1986 during his time as a composition doctoral student in Eastman, Dr. Chin has been actively commissioned from major ensembles and institutions in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Japan, and Taiwan, for which he wrote large chorus and symphony works as well as chamber and solo pieces. The setting of the instruments in his compositions are often based on commissions. As for the pieces without the restriction of the commission, he chooses his settings and topics mainly

according to what would best express his musical spirit. Most of the freely-composed works are related to the “Caring for Taiwan” series as well as religious influences.

Religious Influences

Dr. Chin has been a Christian since the age of fifteen when he moved to Japan with his family. At that time he was depressed due to a new change in environment, a language barrier, and academic difficulties at school. He found his inner peace in religion and made friends with Mandarin-speaking people in church, since then becoming religious. Dr. Chin composed music for church using traditional tonal religious idiom while learning and absorbing avant-garde composition techniques at the music conservatory. In his earlier works he intended to separate the two categories into different mindsets, but after graduating from Eastman he realized the necessity to integrate the two to create one unique Self. The symphonic poem “Chasing the Sun” (1994) is the outcome of his first trial. Because YinQi Chorus and Symphony Orchestra is Christian-based, he continuously composes music for religious purpose in addition to other non-religious works.

His first opera *Mackey—the Black Bearded Bible Man*, was also motivated by religious drive. Sung in both English and Taiwanese, it is a full-scale, three-act tribute to the real-life adventures of Christian missionary Rev. Dr George Leslie Mackay, who arrived in Taiwan in 1872. Rev. Mackay was depicted as an educational reformer,

a champion of women's rights, and a good doctor who significantly helped to ease Taiwan's passage toward modernity.⁵ This fact encouraged Dr. Chin to undertake this meaningful project. In spite of its controversial reviews, this work indeed achieved its goal as the very first indigenous opera.

Piano Concerto No.1

Dr. Chin's first piano concerto premiered in April of 2011, by the soloist Ms. Chia-Hui Lu and the National Symphony Orchestra in Taiwan, under the baton of Günther Herbig. This is one of the few piano concerti written by a Taiwanese composer which have premiered in Taiwan by performers within the last 10 years. Promoting Taiwanese composers and performers in Taiwan has become a trend in recent decades, and the discovery of musical trends is considered significant to many Taiwanese.

The Work

Music vs. Poetry

This three-movement concerto is inspired by three different poems. Being an avid reader, Dr. Chin is particularly fond of English poetry. He regards reading classical literature essential in order to nurture people's spiritual life, to enlarge the dimension of sophisticated thinking, and to comprehend the deeper meaning of life.

⁵ William Littler, "Letter from Taipei," *Opera Canada* 50 (Spring 2009): 13.

He once mentioned: “If you only read newspaper and magazine, how could you understand and appreciate Shakespeare and Tolstoy’s languages? Likewise, my music is easier accepted by those who have been listening to classical music.”⁶ Literary works have inspired and guided his search for new musical possibilities and helped him to create a new path.

The relationship between music and poetry can be traced back to the Middle Ages, and there have been enormous numbers of musical compositions based on the poetic inspiration since then. One of the most famous examples is Goethe’s *Faust*, which heavily influenced composers, especially those during the Romantic era: Schumann, Liszt, Gounod, Berlioz, Wagner, and Mahler. Music and poetry share certain characteristics: they juxtapose elements that are referential, mimetic, or conceptual with formal patterns that are mostly independent of external meaning.⁷

Many of Dr. Chin’s musical compositions are based on literary works. His Symphony No.3 “Taiwan” (1996) which consists of three movements titled “Bereaved,” “Dark Night” and “Ascension,” is an agitated reaction to the readings of Taiwan’s history. Another example is a chamber work “Uncertain Skies” in 2006, which was inspired by a haiku written by a Japanese writer Matsuo Basho.

⁶ Gordon Chin, TV interview by Yi-Ling Lin, *Awakening Taiwan*, Taipei, uploaded on Youtube in December 22, 2009.

⁷ Lawrence Kramer, *Music and Poetry: The Nineteenth Century and After* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 5.

The Preview of the Piano Concerto

Dr. Chin's *Piano Concerto No. 1* consists of three movements; each movement is inspired by a poem. The first movement is based on the structure of a Villanelle. While reading the American poet Elizabeth Bishop's (1911-1979) *One Art*, Dr. Chin sensed the structure also offers a platform of stability and change for the musical elements. He decided to adopt the Villanelle for the first movement, and named the movement after the structure of the poem.⁸ The second movement "Adagio" is inspired by the last haiku of a Japanese poet— Matsuo Basho (1644-1694), which depicts a sick traveler wandering on the withered field. Dr. Chin considers it to be about time, in a gloomy atmosphere yet with a sense of anxiety against the contingencies of time.⁹ The third movement "♩ = 104-108" is motivated by an extraordinary stubbornness from a poem of the British poet Emily Brontë (1818-1848), *The Night is darkening round me*. Despite of all kinds of hardship in life, Emily Bronte still retains her courage and persistence to keep being strong.¹⁰ Dr. Chin transformed the spirit into a fast musical movement with many quotations from the previous movements, which can also be viewed as a summary of the entire piano concerto.

⁸ Gordon Chin, *Piano Concerto No.1*, foreword by the composer (Taipei, Taiwan: YinQi, 2009).

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

CHAPTER I: The First Movement “Villanelle”

Poetic and Musical Structure

Villanelle, it has nineteen lines divided into six stanzas—five tercets and one quatrain—turning on two rhymes and build around two refrains, and both refrains share the same rhyme (rhyme a). The first and third lines become the refrain of alternate stanzas and the final two lines to the poem... becomes a model of stability and change, repetition and variation.¹¹

The structure of a villanelle fascinated Dr. Chin in its potential as a musical form when he came across Edward Hirsh’s book *How to Read a Poem*. The English villanelle derived from French villanelle during the late Renaissance era, characterized by pastoral description and simple delicacy of touch.¹² The particular French form which standardizes English villanelle is represented by Jean Passerat’s (1534 – 1602) “Villanelle (J’ay perdu ma Tourterelle)” from 1606. Since then, however, the majority of villanelles have been written in English despite its French origin.¹³

According to Edward Hirsch’s definition of the structure of a villanelle, its repetitive quality promotes a strong sense of unity while still providing variation, through the repetition of lines (refrains) as well as the two-rhyme character. Table 1.1

¹¹ Edward Hirsch, *How to Read a Poem: and Fall in Love with Poetry* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1999): 33.

¹² Philip K. Jason, “Modern Version of the Villanelle,” *College Literature* 7, no. 2 (Spring 1980): 136.

¹³ *Poetic Form: Villanelle*, <http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/5796> (accessed 14 February 2014).

illustrates the entire structure of a standard villanelle, containing specific rhymes and refrains corresponding with each line. In general, middle stanzas follow a regular pattern of rhymes and refrains while the outer stanzas include modification. Table 1.1 also marks all the breaks between stanzas, since the composer treats breaks in a special manner in musical transcription.

Table 1.1 The Structure of a Standard Villanelle

Villanelle				
Structure:	2 Rhymes:	2 Refrains: A1 & A2	Entire Scheme	
Stanza	Line	a & b	(both share rhyme a)	
1 st tercet	1 st	A	A1	A1
	2 nd	B		B
	3 rd	A	A2	A2
			Break	
2 nd tercet	4 th	A		A
	5 th	B		B
	6 th	A	A1	A1
			Break	
3 rd tercet	7 th	A		A
	8 th	B		B
	9 th	A	A2	A2
			Break	
4 th tercet	10 th	A		A
	11 th	B		B
	12 th	A	A1	A1
			Break	
5 th tercet	13 th	A		A
	14 th	B		B
	15 th	A	A2	A2
			Break	
Quartrain	16 th	A		A
	17 th	B		B
	18 th	A	A1	A1
	19 th	A	A2	A2

While reading Elizabeth Bishop's *One Art* (1976), Dr. Chin sensed the nature of villanelle provides possibilities of stability and variation for musical materials, and he decided to use that structure for the first movement of his *Piano Concerto No.1*.

《One Art》

The art of losing isn't hard to master; [A1]
so many things seem filled with the intent [b]
to be lost that their loss is no disaster. [A2]

Lose something every day. Accept the fluster [a]
of lost door keys, the hour badly spent. [b]
The art of losing isn't hard to master. [A1]

Then practice losing farther, losing faster: [a]
places, and names, and where it was you meant [b]
to travel. None of these will bring disaster. [A2]

I lost my mother's watch. And look! my last, or [a]
next-to-last, of three loved houses went. [b]
The art of losing isn't hard to master. [A1]

I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster, [a]
some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent. [b]
I miss them, but it wasn't a disaster. [A2]

—Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture [a]
I love) I shan't have lied. It's evident [b]
the art of losing's not too hard to master [A1]
though it may look like (*Write it!*) like disaster.¹⁴ [A2]

¹⁴ Robert Dale Parker, *The Unbeliever: The Poetry of Elizabeth Bishop* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 127.

One Art is not a villanelle with perfectly accurate scholarship; instead, it applies a high degree of variation on top of strict form. In earlier periods, a “good” villanelle did not vary the refrains, but its creative and complex variation is now admired.¹⁵ Due to its uniqueness, it is *One Art* which made the villanelle contemporary, post-modern, and popular.¹⁶ For instance, there are several punctuation variations through changes of rhetorical emphasis such as those found in the first two lines of the second tercet:

Losing something everyday. Accept the fluster
of lost door keys, the hour badly spent.

as well as in the first three lines of the quatrain:

—Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture
I love) I shan't have lied. It's evident
the art of losing's not too hard to master.

In both examples, the sentences are split to support the rhythm rather than having complete sentence for each line. Phillip K. Jason also describes the villanelle “as a form in which the power resides in the interplay of constant (repeating) and variable elements.”¹⁷ To be more specific, the repeating lines have to be powerful enough to bear the weight of every repetition in order to construct the strong sense of unity. On the other hand, it is equally important that the unique lines are attractively varied, so

¹⁵ Amanda L. French, “Refrain, Again: The Return of the Villanelle” (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2004), 191.

¹⁶ Ibid., 185.

¹⁷ Philip K. Jason, “Modern Version of the Villanelle,” *College Literature* 7, no. 2 (Spring 1980): 137.

that they prevent the risk of tedium.¹⁸ Furthermore, Bishop's *One Art* enlarges the dimension of variation by employing different degrees of modifications on the repeating elements, in which A1 and A2 are varied more or less in their own groups. Table 1.2 lists all the lines containing refrains with their variation in bold, showing the degree of modification in both refrains.

Table 1.2 Variations in Both Refrains A1 and A2

Refrain A1		Refrain A2	
Line 1	The art of losing isn't hard to master;	Line 3	To be lost that their loss is no disaster.
Line 6	The art of losing isn't hard to master.	Line 9	To travel. None of these will bring disaster.
Line 12	The art of losing isn't hard to master.	Line 15	I miss them, but it wasn't a disaster.
Line 18	The art of losing's not too hard to master	Line 19	Though it may look like (Write it!) like disaster.
Low		High	

Note that A1 is mostly the same until the last refrain (line 18), while A2 is distinctly varied each time, with exception for the last word "disaster." Each refrain group shares different degrees of variation; likewise in his musical correspondence, Dr. Chin manipulates various modifications on his musical refrains.

Though the content of the poetry is about the art of losing, it has nothing to do with the composing of music. To structure the first movement, Dr. Chin took the

¹⁸ Philip K. Jason, "Modern Version of the Villanelle," *College Literature* 7, no. 2 (Spring 1980): 137.

external form in a straightforward way, and he clearly labeled each passage corresponding with the lines and breaks of a villanelle. Table 1.3 discusses the structure of a villanelle with its corresponding musical associations. Note that all the break sections do not contain any piano part, and there are different manners showing how each refrain differs from one another.

Table 1.3 Structural Comparison between a Villanelle and the First Movement

Bishop				Chin	
Structure: Stanza, Line and Break		2 Rhymes: A (-ster) & B (-ent)	2 Refrains: A1 & A2	Labeled Sections	Compositional Details
1 st tercet	1 st	A	A1	[N/A]	Piano starting with momentum 16 th notes, tone cluster triplets
	2 nd	B		I	Similar beginning with previous one, but varied
	3 rd	A	A2	II	Slower tempo, flowing gesture
		Break 1		III	No piano. Soft percussions with strings. 19"
2 nd tercet	4 th	A		IV	Similar momentum with beginning section
	5 th	B		V	Slower, triplets, lyric
	6 th	A	A1	VI	Tempo I. Initial musical content but starts with orchestra, piano later joins in
		Break 2		VII	No piano. Soft percussions with strings. 16". Shorter than other space sections
3 rd tercet	7 th	A		VIII	Similarity with II, but more developed
	8 th	B		IX	More interaction with the orchestral session
	9 th	A	A2	X	Identical to II

Break 3				XI	No piano. Soft percussions, strings and flute. 19”
4 th tercet	10 th	A		XII	Starting with V, but more in depth musical development
	11 th	B		XIII	Tempo I, no piano part, momentum as the beginning, serve as a bridge to the next section
	12 th	A	A1	XIV	Transposed theme is partially shared with orchestra, more interactive in between
Break 4				XV	No piano. Soft percussions and strings. 19”
5 th tercet	13 th	A		XVI	Starting with transposed VIII, declamatory
	14 th	B		XVII	Varied rhythmic pattern, climatic passage, stretto
	15 th	A	A2	XVIII	Only same 2 nd half with X
Break 5				XIX	No piano. Soft percussions, strings and flute. 19”
Quar- train	16 th	A		XX	Identical to IV
	17 th	B		XXI	Starting with transposed XX
	18 th	A	A1	XXII	Identical to the beginning refrain of A1
	19 th	A	A2	XXIII	Starting same as II, but the ending differs.

Each stanza section is around ten measures long, while the break sections only take one unmetered measure. These unmetered measures are made clear with duration in specific seconds on different fragments. The complete movement comprises two hundred and nine measures, and the performance length is about twelve minutes.¹⁹

¹⁹ Gordon Chin, *Piano Concerto No.1*, Günther Herbig (conductor) and Chia-Hui Lu (piano) with National Symphony Orchestra, Taiwan National Concert Hall, April 24, 2010, unpublished live recording of the world premiere.

Stanzas vs. Breaks

The methods in which Dr. Chin applies the poetic form to his music writing are generally pretty distinguishable, yet at times he uses moderate variation and flexibility. For example, he inserts five percussion ensemble sections (section number III, VII, XI, XV and XIX) corresponding with the five breaks in the poem between each stanza. The purpose of the percussion sections is to create a sense of space between each stanza, and the breaks in the music are static when compared to the active stanzas, as if time stops for a while. The sections differ slightly among each other in texture, length, combination of instruments, and the addition of strings and flute to the percussions. Nevertheless, the general sonority among these five sections is similar and consistent, wherein the sudden shifts between the stanza and the break sonorities are aurally intelligible to the audience. The selection of the percussion instruments is also interesting; included are ocean drum, lion roar, sand block, seashell, wind chimes, two stones as well as typical percussion instruments such as timpani, marimba and vibraphone.

Formal Repetitions

The two refrains, A1 and A2 (Examples 1.1 & 1.2 respectively), appear four times in the poem. They differ from each other within the same refrain, but manage to keep their respective musical essence. Take A1 for example, the beginning section

(without number) and section XXIII are exactly identical, while VI starts with orchestra rather than piano and XIV is a transposed version. Likewise in all the A2 sections, II and X are identical, whereas XVIII only shares the same ending and XXIII shares merely the beginning. Those repetitions with minor variations provide considerable relevance and consistency in each refrain, which not only reminds the listeners of the repetitive nature of a villanelle, but also give the entire piece a sense of unity.

Example 1.1 Refrain A1, mm. 1–10, 1st movt.

Refrain A1
mm. 1–10 $\text{♩} = 120$

Piano

The musical score for Refrain A1, measures 1–10, first movement, is presented in three systems. The first system (measures 1–4) is in 4/4 time, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The piano part features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and a more complex bass line in the left hand. Dynamics include 'f' (forte) and 'cresc.' (crescendo). The second system (measures 5–8) continues the accompaniment with some rests and dynamic markings of 'f', 'mp' (mezzo-piano), and 'cresc.'. The third system (measures 9–10) features a more active piano part with triplets and a 'ff' (fortissimo) dynamic marking. The score ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

Example 1.2 Refrain A2, mm. 21–30, 1st movt.

Refrain A2
mm. 21–30
♩ = c. 80–88

The musical score for Refrain A2, measures 21–30, is presented in three systems. The first system shows the piano part with a melodic line in the right hand and a more rhythmic line in the left hand. The second system shows the piano part with a melodic line in the right hand and a more rhythmic line in the left hand. The third system shows the piano part with a melodic line in the right hand and a more rhythmic line in the left hand. The score includes dynamic markings like *mf*, *ff*, *cresc.*, and *dim.*, as well as articulation like accents and slurs. The tempo is marked as *c. 80–88*.

Both refrains A1 and A2 demonstrate a general style of the piano writing in this movement. In addition to the frequent switch of the meters between 4/4 and 6/4, the two refrains retain their momentum with constantly flowing figures (refrain A1 mm. 1–6, and 9; refrain A2 mm. 1–5 and 7) as well as occasional tone clusters with distinct rhythmic patterns (refrain A1 mm. 7–8 in triplets; refrain A2 m. 28 in dotted rhythm). Both refrains convey more interests in rhythmic varieties than in melodic placement, in which the characteristics apply to the entire movement.

There are some existing musical forms featuring a strong sense of repetition, among them is the rondo form that may contain as many returns of the A theme as possible. Then what are the differences between the repetitive qualities of a big rondo form and that of a villanelle structure? In order to compare both forms with the same

scheme, in Table 1.4 shows the big rondo form consist of nineteen sections which corresponds exactly with the standard villanelle structure. It compares many characteristics between each form and their respective recurring refrains, wherein the villanelle contains more subtle and complex qualities of repetition than the regular rondo form.

Table 1.4 Structural Comparison between Rondo and Villanelle

Form	Rondo	Villanelle
Scheme	ABACADAEAFADACABA	A1,b,A2/a,b,A1/a,b,A2/a,b,A1/a,b,A2/a,b,A1,A2
Symmetry	Yes (on the 10 th section “F”)	No (3+3+3+3+3+4 structure of 19 lines)
Refrains #	Only A ten A, begin and end on A	A1 & A2 four A1 & four A2, begin on A1 but end on A2
Regularity of the Refrains	High The A section always resumes right after the other sections.	Low The A1 and A2 do not reappear on a regular basis while having many other sections in between each re-appearance.
Audibility of the Refrains	High Easy to catch the A theme.	Low The structure is more complex with 2 refrains repeating in a quasi-regular pattern.

Table 1.4 portrays the ways in which the repetitive nature is much less obvious in the villanelle than in the rondo form. It could be assumed when Dr. Chin sought a new way to apply the idea of repetition, he observed that the villanelle’s interesting architecture offered a new flavor and possibility for repetition in a big musical form.

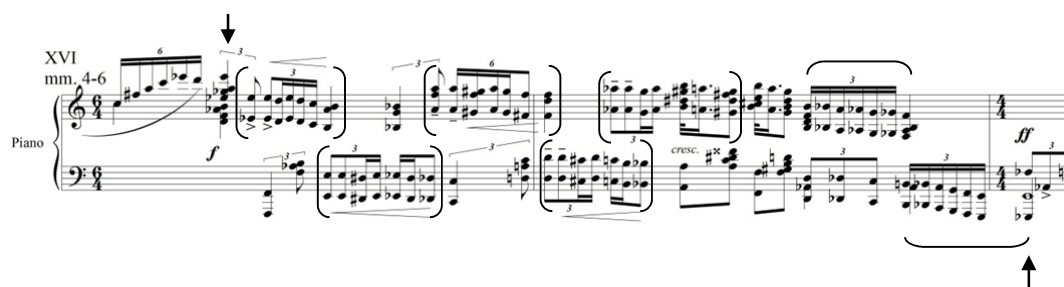
Views from a Pianist

As it is written by a composer and pianist, it takes the form of a typical piano concerto, where the role of the piano is rather substantial. Except for the five percussion sections representing the breaks, the piano is mostly the chief character of the movement, with an occasional taking over the main theme by the orchestra. The use of piano range is quite extended especially when there are running passages and doublings (Examples 1.3 and 1.4).

Example 1.3 IX mm. 1–3, 1st movt.



Example 1.4 XVI mm. 4–6, 1st movt.



In Example 1.3, Dr. Chin spans more than four octaves within two measures of rapid runs (IX mm. 2–3); both hands surf closely in the same direction from the bottom to the top of the register, continuing the musical flow with its linear texture. Example 1.4 shows the register of the doublings reaching five octaves between the

highest E-flat in XVI m. 4 and the lowest E-flat in XVI m. 6 (shown with arrows).

This contrapuntal writing requires an equal emphasis in both hands due to the imitative quality in the patterns (shown with brackets). Both Examples 1.3 & 1.4 also exhibit the fact that while using the expansive range of the piano, the music varies the textural intensity in different manners. Dr. Chin treats lower and higher register equally, not indicating any specific timbre in different registers.

On top of virtuosic runs and powerful strikes of tone clusters, the music demands that the pianist has a considerable sense of rhythm and consistent pulse. Example 1.5 illustrates the rhythmic interaction between the orchestra and the piano; both closely interchange with each other to construct a solid rhythmic pattern.

Example 1.5 IX mm. 4–8, 1st movt.

IX
mm. 4–8

Winds

Piano

Strings

Note that each entrance in both the piano and the orchestra are rather fragmental. In IX mm. 4–5 the piano is imitating the descending motion, staccato quality, dynamics and the rhythm in the woodwinds, whereas in IX mm. 6–8 the piano develops its own rhythmic and dynamic interests, as opposed to the repetitive string figures underneath.

Featuring the rhythmic interest of the pieces, the first movement requires the pianist to clearly deliver a rhythmic complexity. Example 1.6 demonstrates a passage with diverse rhythmic figures changing quickly under a moderately fast tempo ($\text{♩} = 120$).

Example 1.6 XVII mm. 9–11, 1st movt.



Within the three measures, there are hemiolas (m. 9), dotted rhythms (mm. 9–11) which juxtapose with triplets and syncopation in octaves (mm. 10–11), as well as several accents (mm. 9–11). The pianist has to be acute enough to execute all the musical details while maintaining momentum throughout. Examples 1.7 and 1.8 are passages with frequent accents and syncopated figures; they also demand the pianist have rhythmic awareness as well as finger strength under the dynamics of *ff*.

Example 1.7 XVI mm. 6–8, 1st movt.



Example 1.8 XXI mm. 5–6, 1st movt.



In Example 1.7, the accents fall on different triplet units changing every two beats: the first two on the 2nd unit, the following four on the 1st unit, and then the final two on the 3rd unit, which create a sense of subtle irregularity. On the other hand, in Example 1.8 there is a regular rhythmic pattern (in brackets) constructed by syncopation and accents between both hands. Note that every accent in Example 1.8 is accompanied by a leap in octave in opposite direction, which requires the cooperation and precision of both hands for physically demanding challenges.

In sections that require a delicate legato playing a multi-layer texture, and where the dynamics are comparatively much softer, the music demands the pianist to display clear voicing while being expressive and lyrical. Example 1.9 shows the general texture, dynamic level, and rhythmic patterns found in some slower sections. This style of writing is reminiscent of J. S. Bach's *The Well-Tempered Clavier* the C major

prelude in book I, in which the bass holds the long notes while the upper two feature ascending arpeggios. Starting from XII m. 4 Dr. Chin expands the textural dimension by placing an evident melody on top; this particular writing (in sections V & XII) is mostly based on using triplets throughout, which makes it stand out from other sections.

Example 1.9 XII mm. 1–6, 1st movt.



In general, Dr. Chin's piano writing requires great finger strength, a consistent sense of pulse, and an awareness of rhythmic complexity. These are all important factors of his compositions, while also being able to deliver lyrical melodic lines in a multi-layer texture. Those characteristics are reminiscent of the style of Prokofiev's piano concerto writing, in which both composers wrote in an atonal language with focused rhythmic interest in addition to skillful orchestration.

CHAPTER II: The Second Movement “Adagio”

The Haiku

The second movement was inspired by a haiku by Matsuo Basho (1644 – 1694), a Japanese *haiku* writer who crystallized the style of haiku and embodied the philosophy of Zen Buddhism, social customs, and episodes of Japanese history into his own poetry.²⁰ Basho lived his whole life in material simplicity, religious spirituality, and made many long journeys both within and away from of Japan, searching for his inspiration for his haiku writing. Basho’s unique style attracted Dr. Chin to compose his music based on the haiku poems. In addition to this movement, Dr. Chin also wrote a chamber work entitled “Uncertain Skies” (2006) based on another of Basho’s haiku.

Haiku is a modern term for an independent verse form; a three-line poem of Japanese origin with a 5-7-5 syllabic rhythm.²¹ Basho’s haiku are literally *hokku*, the first stanza from a *haikai no renga* which is a comic linked verse. It was not until Masaoka Shiki (1867-1902) popularized the haiku as a self-contained verse form in the nineteenth century.²² In addition to its structural efficiency of 5-7-5 syllables in

²⁰ Harold G. Henderson, *An Introduction to Haiku: An Anthology of Poems and Poets from Basho to Shiki* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1958), 6.

²¹ David Landis Barnhill, *Basho’s Haiku: Selected Poems by Matsuo Basho* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 280.

²² Ibid.

three lines, almost every conventional haiku contains a *kigo* (season word) which suggests a particular season of the year, as well as many associations or quotations which are recognized by literate Japanese.²³ Haiku is characteristic in that there are so many suggestions within so few words; haiku seldom give the picture in details. Instead they invite readers to be co-creators, adding to the words their own imaginations and associations of the poem to develop their own understanding.²⁴ Haiku is an art of shortness, which is not only subtle but complex in content.²⁵

It is usually impossible to translate a Japanese haiku literally and retain the seventeen-syllable form for many reasons. The different cultural context between Japan and English-speaking countries may require more textual details to explain the embedded associations within the original poem. Additionally, the languages themselves differ, in which English syllables have much variety in structure as well as length in letters, whereas the Japanese *on* (sound) are comparatively uniform and short.²⁶ Table 2.1 compares the characteristics of the haiku writing in both languages, demonstrating the shared similarities as well as the distinctions of each language.

²³ Peter Beilenson, introduction to *A Haiku Garland* (Mount. Vernon, NY: Peter Pauper Press, 1968).

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Peter Beilenson, trans., *The Four Seasons: Japanese Haiku* (Mount Vernon, NY: Peter Pauper Press, 1958), 4.

²⁶ David Landis Barnhill, *Basho's Haiku: Selected Poems by Matsuo Basho* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 5-6.

Table 2.1 Haiku Writing in Both Japanese and English

Haiku		
Structure	3 lines of 5-7-5 syllables, 17 in total, compact	
Content	Season word, nature, association, suggestion	
Language	Japanese	English
Unit	<i>On</i> (sound): Uniform, short, most consisting of a consonant and a vowel	Syllable: Much more variety in structure and length in letters
Writing	Written in 1 or 2 lines, in printed edition is 1 line horizontally from top to bottom	Written in 3 lines, according to the syllable arrangement
Length	More concise	Longer sentence

Like many other artists, Basho's later works represent his best and most mature style and philosophy. The particular haiku which inspired Dr. Chin on his second movement of his *Piano Concerto No.1*, is Basho's very last haiku. In fact, he died three days after having composed this poem ill in bed, surrounded by his friends and pupils in Osaka in November 1694. During his last illness he constantly discussed religion, philosophy and poetry. He criticized himself for his strong devotion to composing poems, even at this critical moment, and said, "This is my last obsession!"²⁷ Table 2.2 illustrates the original text as well as different transcriptions of the haiku.

²⁷ Matsuo Basho, *Basho: The Complete Haiku*, trans., annot. and with an intro. Jane Reichhold (Tokyo & New York: Kodansha International, 2008), 394.

Table 2.2 Details of the Haiku

Date of Writing	Nov. 25 th , 1694
Original Poem (Japanese)	旅に病んで夢は枯野をかけ廻る ²⁸
Literal English Translation (not metered)	Sick on a journey my dreams wander the withered fields. ²⁹
Phonetic Transcription	<i>tabi ni yande / yume wa kare no o / kake meguru</i> ³⁰

Note that the original haiku is typically written as one line since Japanese readers are aware of 5-7-5 rhythm,³¹ whereas most English translations arrange the haiku in three lines according to the specific order of the original. The translations vary from different sources, yet the general atmosphere and key words are relatively alike.

According to his foreword to the *Piano Concerto No.1*, Dr. Chin credits his inspiration to Robert Hass for his English translation of the haiku.³²

Like many other kinds of poetry, haiku is meant to be read several times in order to apperceive its abundant overtones contained within its condensed external form. Music, on the other hand, is a temporal art in which the content exists in constant motion and requires duration for its development and completion.³³ In other words,

²⁸ Matsuo Basho, *Basho: The Complete Haiku*, trans., annot. and with an intro. Jane Reichhold (Tokyo & New York: Kodansha International, 2008), 394.

²⁹ Robert Hass, ed., *The Essential Haiku: Versions of Basho, Buson, and Issa* (Hopewell, NJ: Ecco Press, 1994), 54.

³⁰ Matsuo Basho, *Basho: The Complete Haiku*, trans., annot. and with an intro. Jane Reichhold (Tokyo & New York: Kodansha International, 2008), 394.

³¹ David Landis Barnhill, *Basho's Haiku: Selected Poems by Matsuo Basho* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 6.

³² Gordon Chin, *Piano Concerto No.1*, foreword by the composer (Taipei, Taiwan: YinQi, 2009).

³³ Anthony Storr, *Music and Mind* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1992), 168-88.

readers are meant to read haikus repeatedly, savoring particular lines or words more than the others, and comparing different lines as many times as needed to create a personal picture. Because music relies on rhythm and timing, the composer would need to deliberate the musical architecture based on how and what he wants to bring out, with an appropriate sense timing and sound.

Musical Interpretation

As a co-creator of the haiku, Dr. Chin added his personal emotions and imaginations to the haiku through his music writing. Unlike the first movement, which focuses heavily on structure, the second movement has nothing to do with the structure of the haiku; rather, the composer captured into his music writing his immediate reflections after reading the poem. It can be certain that Dr. Chin relates his afterthought to the background of the poem, as well as applying his own personal experiences. According to his foreword to the concerto, Dr. Chin considers that the second movement is “about time, in a somber mood yet also with a sense of fury against the contingencies of time.”³⁴ The composer is probably aware of the fact that this poem serves as Basho’s last work, and that it subtly implies sorrow and anxiety regarding his worsened health and the unexpected occurrences that happened during his last days of life. In addition, Dr. Chin also remembered there is “an enormous

³⁴ Gordon Chin, *Piano Concerto No.1*, foreword by the composer (Taipei, Taiwan: YinQi, 2009).

sensation of emptiness, an echo of the cry of a soul trapped helplessly in the barren and withered fields.”³⁵ It is possible that the poetic description recalled to him images of the winter withered field that he had seen while studying in Japan, with the sensation that he possessed at that moment merging with his own imagination. Examples 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 demonstrate Dr. Chin’s musical reaction to his emotional fluctuations after reading the poem.

Example 2.1 mm. 13–26, 2nd movt.

The musical score for Example 2.1, measures 13–26 of the second movement, is written for piano. It begins with the tempo marking 'Andante'. The music is characterized by a continuous flow of sextuplets in both the right and left hands. The dynamics start at mezzo-piano (mp), increase to forte (f), and include a crescendo (cresc.) leading to a final decrescendo (dim.) and a very soft ending (pp) marked 'Adagio'. The score includes various articulations and slurs over the sextuplets.

Example 2.1 shows the aggressive piano opening with a wide range of dynamic changes, with various articulations in a continuous flow of sextuplets. The overall agitated atmosphere suggests that there is fury and anxiety in the sick traveler’s mind, which immediately creates a tension with the preceding passive orchestral tutti.

³⁵ Gordon Chin, *Piano Concerto No.1*, foreword by the composer (Taipei, Taiwan: YinQi, 2009).

Example 2.2 mm. 26–44, 2nd movt.

In Example 2.2, the arrows with two directions illustrate the “echoing effect” in a contrapuntal texture. The two melodic contours contain many dissonant intervals such as major and minor seconds and augmented fifths in a slow-moving tempo. These create a mysterious atmosphere as if there are somber cries echoing over the barren field during a cold winter dusk.

Example 2.3 mm.62–67, 2nd movt.

The murmuring of the falling 4-note pattern (as I define it “sick motif” later) shown in Example 2.3 suggests the traveler’s complaints on his illness and recalling the withered scenery when he was on the journey. The echoes might be physical sounds or mental illusions, as if the reality seems dreamy to the sick wanderer. Those

images and sensations comprise the basic aesthetics of this movement, and this movement demonstrates Dr. Chin's personal interpretation of the haiku via musical expression.

This haiku serves not merely as Basho's "death poem" that summarizes his philosophy as a whole, but also as a sentimental farewell gift to his friends and disciples who accompanied him through his last illness. It also serves as a final glance in to the world that he had been experiencing for fifty years. Here is the English translation of the original poem with bolded key words which are considered important and relevant to the music writing, and the key words will be compared with the musical figures:

Sick [1] on a journey
my **dreams** [2] **wander** [3]
the **withered fields** [4].

1. Sick: The soft and decrescendo falling 4-note pattern (Examples 2.4 & 2.5) implies the weak and sorrowful sighing gesture of the traveler, brought out by their prominent use of semitone. In addition to the decaying end of each pattern, the semitones provide the melody with a gloomy mood due to its dissonant nature. The composer may also express the idea of sadness through the falling tear motif from John Dowland's song *Flow My Tears*, as depicted in Example 2.6.

Example 2.4 mm. 51–52, 2nd movt.

Chord progressions indicated:

Right hand: D - C# - C - B, B - A ---- G ---- Gb

Left hand: F# - F - E - Eb, F - E - Eb ---- D

Example 2.5 mm. 62–67, 2nd movt.

Chord progressions indicated:

Right hand: D - Db - C - B, D - Db - C - B, D - Db - C - B, F - E - Eb - D, F - E - Eb - D, F - E - Db - C

Example 2.6 John Dowland's "Flow my tears," mm. 1–2³⁶

Tempo: (Lento)

Voice lyrics: Flow my tears, fall from your springs! Downe vaine lights, shine you no more

2. Dream: Series of soft glissandi and slide notes suggest the unsettled and swinging nature between dream and reality within the traveler's mind. Example 2.7 shows the major-minor seventh chords hidden in the beginning passage, where the chords contain slightly more sentiment than the pure tone clusters. In Example 2.8, there is an extensive glissandi played by all of the pitched instruments.

³⁶ Julia Winterson, ed., *The New Anthology of Music* (London: Peters Edition, 2000), 347.

Example 2.7 mm. 1–4, 2nd movt.

Adagio ♩ = 50-54

mm. 1-4

Flute *p*

Oboe *mp*

Cl. in B \flat *p*

Strings *pp*

Example 2.8 mm. 93–97, 2nd movt.

mm. 93-97

Woodwinds *p*

Bass Drum *p*

Strings *p*

3. Wander: The “wandering motif” is a segment which reoccurs many times

throughout the movement, mostly the woodwinds and vibraphone in soft passages, as

if the traveler occasionally recalled a memory fragment from far past. This cyclic

“wandering motif” (Example 2.9) depicts the wandering mood and steps of the

traveler with its particular pattern. Furthermore, it generates an important thematic

transformation (Example 2.10) in sextuplets, and both motifs are then used freely

(Example 2.11). This transformed version is particularly prevalent in all the agitated passages, in which Dr. Chin illustrates the fury of the traveler (Example 2.12).

Example 2.9 mm. 1–2, 2nd movt.

Example 2.10 m. 13, 2nd movt.

Example 2.11 mm. 115–18, 2nd movt.

Example 2.12 mm. 13–18, 2nd movt.

The transformed version of the “wandering motif” (Example 2.12) is important because it reoccurs frequently in the piano entrances, which draws much of the listener’s attention with its high intensity and its contrast with the orchestra.

4. Withered field: The sense of a withered field is depicted by the orchestra's sparse orchestration, low dynamics and thin texture, as shown in Example 2.13. Despite the low sustaining notes held by strings, there are only a few instruments playing the “wandering motif” in addition to other small fragments at one time. This overall openness in the sonority not only establishes the inactive atmosphere in the beginning of the movement, but also forms a significant contrast with the piano solo which occurs a few measures later.

Example 2.13 mm. 1–8, 2nd movt.

Adagio

The musical score for Example 2.13, measures 1-8 of the 2nd movement, is written for a full orchestra and piano. The tempo is Adagio. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The instruments listed are Flute, Oboe, Clarinet in Bb, Bassoon, Horn in F, Trumpet in Bb, Trombone, Vibraphone, Piano, Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello, and Double Bass. The score shows a sparse orchestration with low dynamics (p, mp, pp) and thin texture. The piano part is prominent, playing a wandering motif. The strings provide low sustaining notes.

In general, the piano plays the role of the sick traveler showing his anxiety and helplessness due to the unpredictability of the things happening to him. This occurs as the orchestra depicts a withered environment and the traveler's wandering dreams residing in his sub-consciousness.

Formal Structure

Titled with a tempo marking “Adagio,” this movement consists of seven sections with alternating tempi of Adagio and Andante, which is illustrated in Table 2.3. In general, the orchestra holds a considerable role in providing the overall atmosphere and particular flavors of the poem, as well as occasionally taking over the piano part. As an instrument of intense expression, the piano produces a highly dramatic contrast.

Table 2.3 Structure and Musical Details of the Second Movement

Section with Measure #	Tempo Markings with Measure #	Prominent Part	Special Remarks
[N/A] (1–25)	Adagio (1–12) – Andante (13–24)	Adagio: orchestra – Andante: piano	Orchestral introduction represents “dream motif” and “wandering motif;” piano entrance shows the thematic transformation of wandering motif with fury.
I (26–51)	Adagio	Orchestra only	Echoing effect with expressive legato and long notes in a slow tempo, as if time is prolonged at this point.
II (52–67)	Adagio	Piano	“Sick motif” with echoes by the piano with “wandering motif” in the orchestra.
III (68–102)	Andante (68–97) – Adagio (98–102)	Both parts	Piano suddenly gets agitated with the transposed initial piano entrance (from m. 13), and both piano and orchestra react actively and build up the sectional climax; when the orchestra totally takes over in m. 86,

			the intensity starts to loosen with longer glissandi, note value, softer dynamics and slower tempo.
IV (103–124)	Adagio	Piano	Recalling II with a hint of waltz accompaniment (Example 2.14), followed by a tutti with echoes of the “wandering motif.” A new rhythmic pattern (Example 2.15) pops out as a firm introduction to the following section.
V (125–147)	Adagio	Both parts	Containing hyperactive figures derived from previous section (Example 2.16), constantly accumulating the tension until m. 134 with <i>fff</i> , before releasing its intensity in m.137.
VI (148–156)	Adagio	Piano solo	Only 9 measures, the result of the tension release as well as the reminiscence of section II.
VII (157–186) Final	Andante (157-176) – Adagio (177-86)	Orchestra	A large quotation of 24 measures (mm. 158–81) inserted from section III; the piano only plays the first and the last 2 measures. In mm.158–164 the orchestra plays everything that appears in mm.79–85 and take over all the piano parts, whereas in mm.165–181 is identical with mm.85–102. Coda (182–86) ends with the <i>cresc.</i> “wandering motif” which is the first and last time it is played by the piano, when the orchestra gets to disappear softly (Example 2.17).

Supplementary
figures

Example 2.14 mm. 107–10, 2nd movt.

mm.107-10

Piano

Example 2.15 mm. 119–21, 2nd movt.

mm.119-21

Piano

Example 2.16 mm. 125–129, 2nd movt.

mm.125-129

Piano

Example 2.17 mm. 185–86, 2nd movt.

mm.185-86

Flute

Vibraphone

Glockenspiel

Tam-tam

Piano

Strings

Views from a Pianist

This slow middle movement demonstrates a high degree of contrast and intensity in a slow tempo. Emotionally the pianist often needs to abruptly break through the static background, asserting his or her own statement, and quickly manipulating dramatic changes in dynamics and articulation varieties. Example 2.18 displays a passage with a wide range of dynamics (from *pp* to *f*), big leaps and many extensive runs over four octaves, along with several accents and staccato, therefore the shape of musical intensity from *mp* to *ff* and to *pp* is achieved within a mere five measures.

Example 2.18 mm. 21–26, 2nd movt.

The musical score for Example 2.18 consists of two systems of piano music. The first system, labeled 'Piano', contains measures 21 through 25. It begins with a *mp* dynamic and a sixteenth-note triplet. The melody features large leaps and is accompanied by dense sixteenth-note runs in the bass. Dynamics shift to *sf* and then *f*. The second system contains measures 26 through 30. It starts with a *mp* dynamic and a *dim.* (diminuendo) marking. The texture is more complex with many chords and sixteenth-note patterns. The piece concludes with a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic. The tempo marking 'Adagio' is placed at the end of the second system.

A similar situation happens in Example 2.19, where the dynamics from *ff* to *mp* only takes two and a half measures in an Andante tempo, which is faster than the general pace of the movement. Here the handling of the emotional fluctuations with particular expressions and sound must be handled with precise timing: from the “furious” mood of the traveler (m. 59, *ff*) to the feeling of being “sick” (m. 62, *mp*).

Example 2.19 mm. 59–64, 2nd movt.



Example 2.20 demonstrates a passage with many physically demanding challenges. The usage of wrist and arm, good fingerings, and motions in pivot and rotation all need to be properly applied in order to arrive at the movement’s climax with required speed, dexterity and dynamics.

Example 2.20 mm. 125–129, 2nd movt.



In general, the piano part holds a fuller texture than the orchestral writing; even though they share nearly the same amount of time performing, the piano performs high levels of intensity, contrast and drama of this movement. Meanwhile, the music requires the pianist to have good finger strength, dexterity, and sensitivity to execute distinct articulations, tone colors, and musical expressions.

CHAPTER III: The Third Movement “♩ = 104 – 108”

Poetic Stubbornness

This movement is based on the poem “The Night is Darkening Round Me” (November 1837) by British writer Emily Brontë (1818–48). Inspired by the clear impression of its unusual stubbornness of a nineteen-year-old girl, Dr. Chin transcribed the concept of stubbornness into various aspects of his music writing.³⁷

Emily Brontë was a very prolific poet, having written approximately two hundred poems and poetic fragments. Most of Emily’s poetry as well as her only novel share similar characteristics: wild imagination, harsh and negative imagery, and a fondness for depicting nature and things of the earth. Dr. Chin was attracted to those themes while writing his third movement, having distinctions that are intelligible in this poem.

³⁷ Gordon Chin, *Piano Concerto No.1*, foreword by the composer (Taipei, Taiwan: YinQi, 2009).

The Night is Darkening Round Me.

The night is darkening round me,
The wild winds coldly blow;
But a tyrant spell has bound me
And I cannot, cannot go.

The giant trees are bending
Their bare boughs weighed with snow,
And the storm is fast descending
And yet I cannot go.

Clouds beyond clouds above me,
Wastes beyond wastes below;
But nothing drear can move me;
I will not, cannot go.³⁸

There seems to be a contradiction between the reserved and anti-social personality of the young Brontë and the strong tone of determination in her poem. It manifests Emily Brontë's inner will of absolute resolution which supported her through her difficult youth, beginning from her mother's death when Emily was a child. In this poem full of wild and powerful imagination, vivid depictions of the cruel natural surroundings do not scare the narrator away, but rather, the speaker insists on staying there with an intensifying declaration at the end of each stanza. The tension between the severe nature and the narrator is depicted in Table 3.1, which also shows the repetition applied in the poem.

³⁸ C. W. Hatfield, ed., *The Complete Poems of Emily Jane Brontë* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941): 56.

Table 3.1 The Repetitions in the Poem *The Night is Darkening Round Me*

	Severe Surroundings	Strong Will of the Narrator
1 st stanza	The darkening night The coldly blowing wild winds	But a tyrant spell has bound me And I cannot, cannot go.
2 nd stanza	The bending giant trees The bare boughs weighed with snow The fast descending storm	And yet I cannot go.
3 rd stanza	Clouds beyond clouds above Wastes beyond wastes below	But nothing drear can move me; I will not, cannot go.
Repetition	Clouds <u>beyond</u> clouds Wastes <u>beyond</u> wastes	And I cannot, cannot go. And yet I cannot go. I <i>will</i> not, cannot go.
Remarks	“Clouds” and “Wastes” within the same line “Beyond” in those two lines	Intensifying the stubbornness from “I am not able to go” to “I could go, but I do not want to.”

Note that each stanza is composed of descriptions of severe natural settings followed by a statement of refusing to leave. The vivid depictions of unfriendly surroundings (the darkening night, the coldly blowing wild winds, the bending giant tree with bare boughs, and the fast descending storm, the clouds above and the wastes below) do not scare the narrator off; instead, the narrator asserts her stubbornness of refusing to leave by concluding each successive stanza with stronger determination (And I cannot, cannot go; And yet I cannot go; I will not, cannot go).

Musical Stubbornness

According to Dr. Chin's commentary on the poem, he indicates that:

There are the night, the wild wind, the storm, and even clouds beyond clouds, and wastes beyond wastes, but we must not turn away from it. One must have enough 'life' in him that his vision, his courage, his persistence will not allow him to go away, and his will is so strong that he cannot go.³⁹


The composer interprets the severe surroundings as the obstacles in our lives; one must have enough vision, courage, persistence, and strong will in order to not turn away from difficulties presented. This extraordinary stubbornness when facing the hardship of life is what interested and inspired Dr. Chin to put it into sound. In the writing of his music, Dr. Chin applied the concept of stubbornness through many levels of repetition. Different degrees of repetition form the essence of this movement, and serve to integrate all the three movements into a whole. The music displays not only the *will* of the poem but also the *wit* of the composer, who integrates the many recurring elements from all three movements into the last one, serving as a review of the entire work.

Table 3.2 provides an overview of different methods of repetition which Dr. Chin applies to the movement. Examples 3.1– 3.11 offer specific examples of each method followed by its explanation. The scale of the repetition varies from a single note or

³⁹ Gordon Chin, *Piano Concerto No.1*, foreword by the composer (Taipei, Taiwan: YinQi, 2009).

rhythmic figure to the stretto writing among the entire ensemble. Furthermore, Dr. Chin integrates multiple methods altogether in some passages, enhancing the sense of stubbornness while embodying different aspects simultaneously. It is worthwhile to mention that toward the end of the third movement, Dr. Chin manipulates quotations from the previous movements into the new elements of the third movement (shown later in Table 3.3). The use of quotation represents a broader meaning of repetition in which the music *repeats* its earlier sources.

Table 3.2 Different Methods of the Repetition

Repetition				
Scale	Method	Effect	Musical example	Remarks
Small	On the same note simultaneously	Doubling with octaves	Ex. 3.1 Ex. 3.3	Both hands play the same melody
	On the same rhythmic figure	Perpetual motion	Ex. 3.4 Ex. 3.5	The throughout 
	On the same theme with rhythmic modification	Variations	Ex. 3.6 Ex. 3.3	Both hands from 16 th notes to sextuplets Adding dotted rhythm
	On the same patterns within a single instrument	Juxtapositions	Ex. 3.7	There are 4 repeated fragments within the initial theme
	On the same patterns among different instrument entries	Stretto	Ex. 3.8	Stretto entrances are paired with different instrument combinations
	Combining multiple methods	Integration	Ex. 3.10 Ex. 3.11	Doubling and perpetual Repeated notes and stretto
	Themes insertions from previous movements	Quotations		Quotations from the first 2 movements are placed toward the end

Example 3.1 shows the most straightforward method of repetition, where the melody is doubled at one octave by both hands. This overall manner is similar to the beginning section of Rachmaninoff's *Piano Concerto No.3* (Example 3.2), where both hands sing the melancholy melody in one octave.

Example 3.1 mm. 68–74, 3rd movt.



Example 3.2 mm. 3–11, Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto No. 3, 1st movt.⁴⁰



Example 3.3 further demonstrates the development of texture intensification by adding more octaves in both hands (mm. 83–85) and harmonizing each note with chords in both hands (mm. 85–88). These are mostly diminished triads and half-diminished seventh chords.

Example 3.3 mm. 83–88, 3rd movt.



⁴⁰ Sergei Rachmaninoff, *Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 30; Piano Concerto No. 4 Op. 40, revised version (1941): for Piano and Orchestra* (London & New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 2004), full orchestra score.

As for the repeating rhythmic figure, Example 3.4 displays the perpetual motion from the very beginning. The precise rhythm of ♪♪♪♪ lasts throughout the entire initial section in different combinations of instruments, with varying articulations, and diverse dynamics, all of which create many contrasting expressions.

Example 3.4 mm. 1–6, 3rd movt.

mm. 1-6 $\text{♩} = 108$

WW. mp p f

Brass f

Vibraphone f f

Per. f f

Marimba f f

Sand Blocks f

Timp. f

Strings f p f

Large rough-edged brush
Timp. scratch with precise rhythm

marcato

The momentum is persistent, acting as a rhythmic drone with slow harmonic progression for sixteen measures through the entire tutti section. When the piano first appears in section I (Example 3.5), the motion carries into the theme with a hint of syncopation (shown with arrows), accompanied by the regular sixteenth notes in the left hand.

Example 3.5 mm. 17–20, 3rd movt.

mm. 17-20 non-legato

Piano mp

The piano entrance in Example 3.5 also serves as the first theme of the third movement. Example 3.6 shows how it generates a variation at the piano entrance in section II, with intelligible modification in the rhythm from sixteenth notes to sextuplets.

Example 3.6: mm. 17–19 vs. mm. 47–49, 3rd movt.

The image shows two musical staves for piano. The top staff, labeled 'mm. 17-19', is marked 'non-legato' and 'mp'. It contains three measures of music. The bottom staff, labeled 'mm. 47-49', is marked 'mp' and contains three measures of music. A downward arrow points from the first measure of the top staff to the first measure of the bottom staff, indicating a transformation. The bottom staff features sextuplets (groups of six notes beamed together) in measures 47 and 48, which are variations of the material in measures 17 and 18.

The initial piano entrance does more than just function as the original theme for the later variation in sextuplets, as within its four-measure theme there are four repeated fragments. Example 3.7 illustrates the four fragment juxtapositions (A, B, C & D) in the first theme; each fragment repeats itself to form a complete measure, with exception to a small insertion of free material in m. 19.

Example 3.7 mm. 17–20, 3rd movt.

The image shows a musical staff for piano, labeled 'mm. 17-20', marked 'non-legato' and 'mp'. The staff contains four measures of music. The first measure is labeled 'A', the second 'B', the third 'C', and the fourth 'D'. These labels indicate the four fragments of the theme. The first three measures (A, B, and C) are repeated twice each to form a complete measure, while the fourth measure (D) is repeated once. This structure illustrates how the four fragments of the theme are used to build the first theme.

This piano theme manifests the sense of repetition in different ways, both a theme for further varied repetition as well as having four repetitions within itself.

Stretto represents the idea of close successions or partial overlapping of the same theme among various entries, which creates a sense of contrapuntal repetition. This contrapuntal repetition is aurally noticeable in the piece, the theme is emphasized by numerous repetitions in different voices within a short time. Meanwhile, it creates textural variety by adding voices at different times.

Example 3.8 mm. 90–94, 3rd movt.

Beginning with section IV (Example 3.8), a new theme appears as the stretto entrance (with arrows), using different instrumental pairings. This new theme is also comprised of five repeated note in its second half; Example 3.9 shows the bassoon entrance of the stretto theme with the five repeated notes.

Example 3.9 mm. 90–91, 3rd movt.

On top of developing the individual application of the concept of repetition, Dr. Chin juxtaposes multiple methods at the same time, providing a fuller sense of repetition. In the beginning of section III (Example 3.10) the music exhibits a doubling in the piano (both hands play the same melody in one octave). It is accompanied by the perpetual motion in the orchestra, where the 1st violin (mm. 68–73), flute (mm. 73–75) and vibraphone (mm. 73–75) repeat the same note in triplets, the 2nd violin (mm. 68–72) and cello (mm. 73–75) repeats the four-note rapid pattern, and the viola in the two-note tremolos (mm. 73–75).

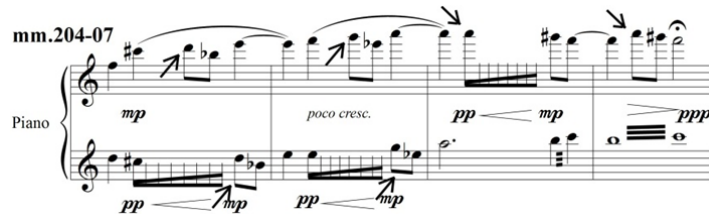
Example 3.10 mm. 68–74, 3rd movt.

The musical score for Example 3.10, measures 68–74, 3rd movement, is presented in a multi-staff format. The staves are labeled: Flute, Vibraphone, Piano, Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello. The Piano part is the most complex, featuring a rapid, flowing melody with many triplets and dynamic markings such as *mp*, *f*, and *p*. The Violin I and Violin II parts have steady eighth-note patterns. The Viola and Cello parts have slower, more rhythmic patterns. The Flute and Vibraphone parts have triplet patterns. The score is in 4/4 time and includes tempo markings like "poco a poco cresc." and "poco a poco decres.".

The piano melody represents the important 2nd theme, which reappears several times later in its textural variation, by adding more octaves and harmonizing the same tune (Examples 3.1 & 3.3). In Example 3.10, Dr. Chin demonstrates that he uses repetition in the theme as well as the accompaniment, thereby providing a steady pulse for the flowing and dactylic theme in the piano.

Even within the same instrument, Example 3.11 displays the stretto entrance (shown with arrows) along with the accelerated repeated notes in both hands.

Example 3.11 mm. 204–07, 3rd movt.



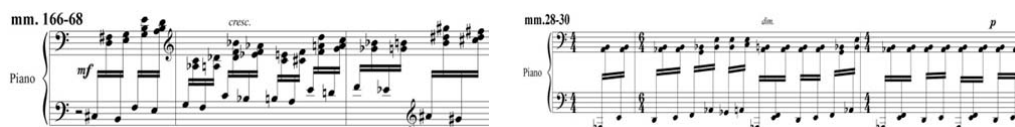
Quotations

Quotations, in which the music repeats the materials from other sources, offer an expansive sense of repetition. Examples 3.12–3.16 illustrate the quotations from the first and the second movements of the *Piano Concerto No. I*, showing how different materials are applied in the third movement and their degree of aural obviousness. Most quotations are only a few measures long; they start to occur more frequently from section VII onward, beginning with less obvious examples. When the music approaches the end of the movement, the use of quotations become more evident and straightforward. This movement concludes with the final section (section XII) beginning with the quotation from the first movement's initial theme. The entire final section is filled with various quotations from all the three movements, representing an active review of the entire work.

Quotations	
III	Earlier Movements

Example 3.12 III, mm. 166–68

I, mm. 28–30



The idea of alternating both hands on the successive sixteenth notes in the low register derives from a segment found in first movement. It occurs three times in the first movement before the complete percussion ensemble sections enter, as well as twice toward the end of the third movement. In both movements this figure serves to function as a transition; without sharing the same notes, both examples only remain hand alternation gesture.

→ Degree of aural obviousness: Low, more recognizable visually rather than aurally, just a hint of textural quotation.

Example 3.13 III, mm. 236–38

I, mm. 1–2



The exact initial fragment from the beginning of the 1st movement starts off the last section (XII) of the third movement. It functions as the most aurally intelligible quotation: in both movements the figure shares identical patterns with many repetitions not only in the piano part, but also among many instrumental entrances. It is clear that Dr. Chin intentionally inserted this quotation in an evident manner.

→ Degree of aural obviousness: High, the most recognizable quotation both visually and aurally, announcing the return of the initial musical idea.

Example 3.14 III, mm. 165–66

mm.165-66

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Double Bass

II, mm. 93–95

mm.93-95

Strings

The sliding technique presents among the strings comes from the second movement, representing the “dream” motif. It is aurally disguisable; however its application differs between both movements creating distinct sonorities. In the second movement, the sliding notes are slow, soft and consistent, where it is intended to establish a certain dreaming atmosphere. In the third movement, the sliding notes are short and fast, with dramatic dynamic changes, which only happens occasionally. This makes it seem as if the wild, imaginative thoughts pop out of the young Emily’s mind.

→ Degree of aural obviousness: Medium, for the unique gliding sound among the string instruments

Example 3.15 III, mm. 191–94

mm.191-94

Flute

Trumpet in C

Timpani

Vibraphone

Marimba

Sand Block

Strings

II, mm. 182–84

mm.182-84

Flute

Clarinet

Trumpet

Choccolo

Vibraphone

Glockenspiel

Tam-tam

Strings

It is very difficult to aurally detect the thin texture and the method of instrumental writing among percussion, strings and occasion woodwind in both movements, which seems noticeable only visually with a music score in hand. Both examples happen just once in their respective movements, and the subtlety of their existence and resemblance suggests the possibility that it stems from the composer's sub-conscious.

→ Degree of aural obviousness: Very low, just a hint of the similarity in texture and sonority without any melody to follow

Example 3.16 mm. 245–47

The musical score for Piano, measures 245-47, is a collage of material from previous movements. The score is written for Piano and consists of 13 measures. The first two measures are marked *f* (forte) and the third measure is marked *mp* (mezzo-piano). The score is divided into four sections, each labeled 'From Mov. I' or 'From Mov. III'. The first section (measures 245-246) is labeled 'From Mov. I'. The second section (measures 247-248) is labeled 'From Mov. III'. The third section (measures 249-250) is labeled 'From Mov. I'. The fourth section (measures 251-252) is labeled 'From Mov. III'. The score includes dynamic markings *f*, *mp*, and *cresc.* (crescendo). The tempo is marked 'mm. 245-47'.

The juxtaposition of the most apparent segments in both movement, expressed as the first 2 beats of the initial theme from 1st and 3rd movements, constructs a powerful and substantial utterance in the beginning of the last sixteen measures. It serves as not only a final highlight of the movement due to its unusual theme arrangement, but also a statement recalling two of the most important musical fragments at the end of the entire *Piano Concerto No. 1*.






→ Degree of aural obviousness: High, combining the most evident piano entrances in a new one.

In general, the quotations from the first movement are much more obvious than those from the second movement. Quotations from the first movement are all in the piano part: Dr. Chin places more intentional and consistent emphasis on quotations via segments of the main theme or the initial entrance, as well as the evident textures or patterns in the piece. On the contrary, the quotations from the second movement are all accompanying material in the tutti with suggestive and subtle application, as if they only exist in the realm of a dream.

Formal Structure

Table 3.3 illustrates the overall structure of this movement. In the first half, the music establishes characteristics of perpetual motion, the reinforcement of the theme with varied version, the dactylic recitative theme which is doubled by both hands with various textures, and the stretto entrance among the tutti. Beginning from section VII, the quotations from the first two movements and new elements from current movement are integrated in noticeable manners, comprising a complex and colorful musical landscape.

Table 3.3 Structure and Musical Details of the Third Movement

Sections with Measure #	Function	Primary Instruments	Special Features
[N/A] (1–16)		Only tutti	Perpetual motion among different instruments
I (17–46)	1 st theme area	Piano	Continuation of the momentum in the piano entrance; introducing the theme
II (47–67)		Piano	Piano entrance is the variation of the first theme in sextuplets
III (68–89)	 2 nd theme area	Piano	Doubling the melody in different textures, the Rachmaninoff 3 resemblance
IV (90–118)		Both tutti and piano	A new theme in the tutti stretto followed by various texture of the previous theme
V (119–41)	 1 st theme area	Only tutti	mm. 126–51 are identical to mm. 1–16
VI (142–60)		Piano	Same as entire section I except for the last measure
VII (161–75)	Quotations start from here!	Both tutti and piano	Where the quotations begins to develop. Both piano and tutti actively interact with each other.
VIII (176–94)		Both tutti and piano	Continuing the quotation from the previous movts, along with some elements from the 3 rd movt.
IX (195–207)	 Varied 2 nd theme	Piano	Recall section III with multiple methods of the repetition
X (208–18)		Only tutti	Recall section IV of the stretto texture
XI (219–35)	 Varied 1 st theme	Piano	Recall initial theme of the 3 rd movt., constant change of meter, and both the piano and the tutti actively interact with the fragments
XII (236–60)	Quotation from 1 st and 3 rd movts.	Both tutti and piano	The most evident quotation from the 1 st movt. starts off the section. The juxtapositions of the initial segments from both 1 st and 3 rd movts. Continues the active interaction of fragment until the end.

In the music history of solo concerto, there are some cases in which the composers inserted the initial theme to the last part of the concerto. Among those is the Prokofiev's *Violin Concerto No.1 in D major*. The melancholy singing theme in the beginning appears at the very end of the concerto in the high register with soft tremolos by the solo violin, as if it recalls a remote dream. However here in Dr. Chin's *Piano Concerto No.1*, the initial theme is reinforced in several aspects; along with all other elements combined throughout the piece, they make a splendid ending.

Views from a Pianist

This movement can be divided into two parts according to how it is structured, and the general length of each musical phrase. The first half (initial section to section VI) features complete sentences or longer phrases with continuous momentum starting from the orchestra introduction, where each musical idea is presented in its full declaration. On the other hand, the second half (sections VII-XII) is filled with quotations and draws attention to its overall fragmentary quality of the musical phrase. The fragments in both the tutti and the piano actively interact with each other toward the end, producing a musical climax with their intense interplay. Example 3.17 displays the busy interaction of musical fragments between the orchestra and the piano in the final section, in which the pianist is required to maintain steady pulse throughout the whole section while manipulating meter changes.

Example 3.17 mm. 236–46, 3rd movt.

mm.236-41

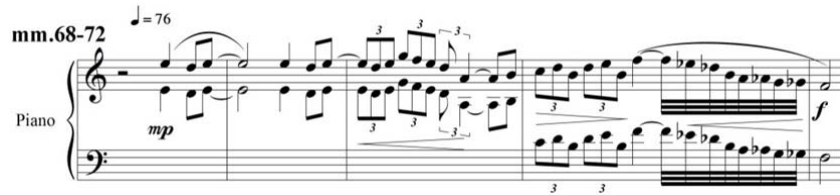
mm.242-46

In mm. 236–37, 240–41 and 243–44, the piano leads the patterns which are immediately imitated by the tutti. Both parts demands high concentration on the part of interaction due to their close relation and meter shift. This is also a requirement in places where the piano rhythmically aligns with the orchestra (mm. 238–39 and 242), so that both parts will precisely play together.

The second theme, which resembles the first theme of Rachmaninoff's *Piano Concerto No.3*, offers a platform for textural diversity for its further development. Examples 3.18–3.21 list different levels of intensity on the same theme, followed by the suggestive emotions by which to interpret the music.

Textural, Dynamic, and Emotional Variety on the 2nd Theme

1st level Example 3.18 mm. 68–72, 3rd movt.



The original theme is presented in monophony with both hands playing the same melody, starting with the dynamic level at *mp*. The suggestive mood of the music is melancholy with a wandering atmosphere due to the circling pattern, with a hint of drama toward the end for its dynamic range and rapid runs.

2nd level Example 3.19 mm. 83–85, 3rd movt.



Starting with *mf*, the dactylic theme is doubled at one octave in both hands with dotted rhythmic modification, as if more authority is added to the theme due to its reappearance. This passage serves as an immediate transition to the next level, in which the music continues to grow bigger.

3rd level Example 3.20 mm. 85–89, 3rd movt.

mm.85-89

Piano

f *ff*

diminish triad Half-diminished 7th chord

The melody is now transposed in four semitones higher and harmonized with diminished triads, half-diminished seventh chords and some tone clusters, along with higher dynamic level (*f* - *ff*) and accents. This level of variation is intended to be played powerfully both emotionally and physically, among the three levels above.

Melody Example 3.21 mm. 107–10, 3rd movt.

vs.
Accomp.

mm.107-110

Piano

mp *mf* *cresc.*

Here both hands do not play the same notes anymore; rather, the theme as the melody in the right hand and the accompaniment of the flowing sextuplets in the left hand lend distinct elements to the texture, with a tender and lyrical tone. The left hand requires light and fast leaps in mm. 108–09, in which the use of rotation will help to facilitate the speed and lightness necessary for the task.

The combination of two recurring melodies in both hands also strengthens the musical intensity by double highlights at one time. Examples 3.22–3.24 demonstrate the alignment of two the important melodies and where they were originally derived from. All three figures come from the 2nd theme area of both sections III-IV.

The Vertical Juxtaposition of Two Themes

The 2 themes
in both hands

Example 3.22 mm. 113–15, toward the end of section IV, 3rd movt.

mm. 113-15

Source of the
right-hand
material
(with bracket)

Example 3.23 mm. 72–75, the second half of the 2nd theme, 3rd movt.

mm. 72-75

Source of the
left-hand
material
(with arrow)

Example 3.24 mm. 90–91, the theme of the stretto, 3rd movt.

mm. 90-91

The polyphonic texture requires the pianist to be aware of its special arrangement and place equal emphasis on each theme. This is on top of the original dynamic of *ff* to reach a sectional climatic point toward *ffffz* at the end of m. 115. In addition to the lightly accented three-against-four rhythm in mm. 114–115 in the left hand, both hands tramp to the opposite end of the keyboard to make the grand arrival. This passage displays several challenges for the pianist; not only is there rhythmic tension between both hands, but the music also requires the pianist to perform a powerful physical expansion on the keyboard.

CONCLUSION

Dr. Chin's three-movement *Piano Concerto No.1* demonstrates three distinctive approaches to how poetic materials influence musical writing. The first movement, Villanelle, is named after a poetic structure of Elizabeth Bishop's *One Art*; where Dr. Chin adopts the external form into a musical transcription. The second movement, Adagio, is a dramatic musical reaction to a Japanese haiku written by Matsuo Basho. Dr. Chin interprets the original haiku in his own way, and he places emphasis on four key words that are significant to the music writing. The third movement, ♩ = 104 – 108, serves as a representation of the stubbornness of the narrator from Emily Brontë's poem "The Night is Darkening Round Me." Dr. Chin conveys this stubbornness using various degrees of repetition, and uses the movement as a dynamic review of the entire piano concerto by making heavy use of quotation from the preceding movements.

The use of repetition is prominent throughout the entire concerto. The refrains A1 and A2 each respectively show different degrees of variation in the initial movement, whereas in the second movement features motifs of important key words reoccurring with the transformation into varying musical content. The third movement displays the greatest variety and subtlety of repetition, ranging from a single note, a

rhythmic pattern to quotations from the previous movements. The concept of employing repetition philosophically unites the three movements as a whole, and the movement also provides an aural consistency and comprehension to the audience through the use of quotation toward the end of the piece.

Overall, the music content displays a sense of coherency of Dr. Chin's overall musical style. He explores a diversity of textures, tone colors and sonorities among different instruments using traditional instrumental techniques. Along with the atonal flavor and the prominent rhythmic interests, this work also presents colorful musical expressions as well as the close interaction between the solo instrument and the orchestra. This Piano Concerto is comparable to the style of Prokofiev's Piano Concerti due to the similarities of textural variety, new perspective of tonality, rhythmic interests, skillful piano and orchestral writing, and the use of quotation toward the end of the last movement.

For pianists, this *Piano Concerto No.1* requires many physical challenges as well as a spectrum of emotional intensities. In all the three movements, the pianist has to display high dexterity in order to execute expansive runs and fast figurations over the expansive range of the piano; full chords and multi-layer textures also demand finger strength and independence. In addition to maintaining a consistent pulse, the music also needs an acute delivery of emotional fluctuations layered with melodic and

rhythmic complexities. In general, this concerto is an idiomatic writing for the piano with considerable techniques for the pianist, which presents the well-rounded efficiency and beauty of the solo instrument.

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